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SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [KPAO](#) [NI](#)
SUBJECT: NIGERIA: DEMOCRACY OUTREACH SUMMARY

REF: A. STATE 44903
[1](#)B. 07 STATE 108924

[1](#)1. (U) In response to ref A, Nigeria is generally considered a free nation and developing democracy. In keeping with the President's Freedom Agenda, the Chief of Mission and officers from relevant Mission agencies and sections (including Political, Public Affairs, and USAID) regularly meet with human rights activists, opposition leaders, civil society representatives and others who may be critical of the government and seek to strengthen Nigeria's nascent democracy. Although Nigeria welcomes refugees from other nations, we are not aware of many dissidents from un-free nations, people living in exile, or asylum seekers living here. In the past year, the Mission organized and hosted numerous events, activities, and meetings in an effort to promote human rights, good governance, and political freedom, including a few events in Rivers and Bayelsa states in the conflict-prone Niger Delta. Several examples of Mission outreach activities are listed below.

[1](#)2. (U) In October 2007, the Mission hosted a human rights reception in honor of the visit to Nigeria by the board of the international organization Human Rights Watch. Bringing together over 80 key Nigerian activists, their international counterparts, and members of the Mission, the event enabled discussions about the importance of human rights in a successful democracy.

[1](#)3. (U) In November 2007, the Mission hosted a civil society dinner in honor of Deputy Secretary John D. Negroponte's visit to Abuja. Over 20 leaders of Nigeria's active civil society attended and shared their views on the need for electoral reform and transparency in the government.

[1](#)4. (U) In January 2008, the Ambassador gave a speech and answered questions at the American Corner in Jos in honor of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day. The event highlighted the importance of civil and human rights activism and how people willing to voice their concerns can make a difference.

[1](#)5. (U) In January 2008, the Ambassador hosted a roundtable of NGO's working in Rivers and Delta states. There was a frank discussion of the difficulties the NGOs face in a region hobbled by militancy and underdevelopment. The event highlighted the role of civic education, information technology and HIV/AIDS programs in providing alternatives to violence and furthering democratic development.

¶6. (U) Also in January 2008, Deputy Assistant Secretary Todd Moss and the Ambassador hosted a dinner for Niger Delta leaders including government leaders, ethnic leaders and NGO leaders to discuss the status of Niger Delta peace negotiations and ways to move forward the democratic development of the region.

¶7. (U) In February 2008, the COM commemorated African-American History month, as well as International Women's Day, by renaming Embassy Abuja's Information Resource Center/ Educational Advising Center the "Rosa Parks Education and Information Center". During the inauguration ceremony, the Ambassador encouraged civil and human rights supporters to emulate the courage of Rosa Parks and continue their courageous fight for equal rights and a free and fair democracy. The event was well attended by civil society and human rights groups.

¶8. (U) Also in February 2008, the COM hosted a womens' roundtable. The event was well attended, with participants including business owners, NGO leaders and artists. Discussion ranged from opportunities to empower women to the state of the educational system.

¶9. (U) In April 2008, The Ambassador convened an interfaith roundtable in the northern Bauchi State. The roundtable brought together five Christian and five Muslim leaders from the region to discuss interfaith relations and look for opportunities for mediation in an area prone to interfaith conflict.

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¶10. (U) In May 2008, USG-funded National Democratic Institute (NDI) offered capacity building training to the national Electoral Reform Commission, providing information on international best practices in electoral systems, appointing of electoral administration bodies and political party representation in electoral administration.

¶11. (U) These are just a few examples of how the Ambassador and other Mission officers show USG support for human rights and democracy; however, Mission agencies and sections engaged in many additional activities throughout the year. For more specific details of mission-wide activities, please see the following Congressionally-mandated annual reports for Nigeria:

2007 Advancing Freedom and Democracy Report
2007 Democracy Strategies Report.
SANDERS